

# Nigeria Agricultural Policy Project Highlights

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## INVESTMENT IN GOOD DATA COLLECTION PAYS HUGE RESEARCH BENEFIT IN THE LONG RUN: LESSONS FROM MY VISIT TO MSU

It is no gainsaying the fact that in research, having access to adequate and reliable data is a *sine qua non* to effective research analysis that culminates in making evidenced-based policy. Whilst this is true, it is unfortunate that in most of Africa, and Nigeria in particular, due largely to paucity of funds, most research activities are carried out without emphasis on the need to invest largely in data collection. This is so despite the reality that good data collection determines the integrity and authenticity of research analysis and the resulting policy recommendations.

Whilst visiting Michigan State University, under the Feed the Future Nigeria Agricultural Policy Project (NAPP), the primacy of the benefits of investing largely in good data collection was brought into fore. I got to understand how critical the long run benefits of this investment is. When researchers invest extensively on good data collection by ensuring that data collected is accurate and adequate, the benefits cut across data analysis and the policy recommendations. For example, effective data prevents unnecessary and un scholarly data mining that undermines the integrity of research efforts. It makes the data analysis stage of the research less cumbersome.

As one of my professors at MSU opined (and I paraphrase):

*“There is no amount of econometric manipulation and modeling that can deliver good empirical results from an already bad data” - Dr. Andrew Dillon, AFRE.*

This is a fact. Most times, junior researchers fall into this trap. We run to the field to collect data only to encounter a mirage of challenges during data analysis. In the process, most often, we find ourselves manipulating the already collected data as it would amount to double expenditure, in time and money, to go back to the field to correct faulty areas of the data. In so doing, junior researchers fall into the trap of un scholarly research ethos.

This is one of the important lessons learned during my stay at MSU that I am bringing into my research program back in Nigeria. I have learnt that it pays to invest in good data collection processes so that errors are minimized and policy recommendations from the research effort are authentic. In fact, I have already doing so. As part of my on-going research projects, I am constantly suggesting to the team, that I belong to, that there must not be any compromise in the data collection process My watchword is “it’s better to pay the price of good data collection now, rather than get the tag of poor research efforts at the end”.



THE AUTHOR WITH DR. ANDREW DILLON, MSU, AFRE

To this end, while in Nigeria, it is a general knowledge that lack of funds is the bane of rigorous and effective data collection, researchers (particularly junior researchers) must ensure that they make good data collection a priority in any of their research efforts and ensure that they do not make compromises in the data collection exercise. This will give

integrity and authenticity to their research efforts and therefore assure reliable evidence-based policy analysis.



THE AUTHOR WITH MSU'S COOK HALL IN THE BACKGROUND.

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